

adopted it was the best. It contributed more to the present constitution of the United States and thereby to the development of constitutional government throughout the country than any other of the original constitutions. It is now the oldest written constitution in the world. But it never was perfect, and it is now less suited to the condition of the people than ever before. "Some men," wrote Jefferson in his old age, "look at constitutions with sanctimonious reverence, and deem them like the ark of the covenant—too sacred to be touched. They ascribe to the men of the preceding age a wisdom more than human, and suppose what they did to be beyond amendment. I knew that age well; I belonged to it and labored with it. It deserved well of its country. It was very like the present but without the experience of the present . . . I am certainly not an advocate of frequent and untried changes in laws and constitutions. . . . But I know also that laws and institutions must go hand in hand with the progress of the human mind." There are many changes in the organization of state government which would make democracy a more difficult prey for organized privilege, but none is more important than this: to give to the executive a larger share in the initiation of legislation.

ARTHUR N. HOLCOMBE.

The Night Train from Amiens

IN le Matin which I bought from a little girl in the sloping square before the Gare de Paris I first saw in type Wilson's battle cry, "Make the world safe for democracy," and thrilled to it, as I suppose did most Americans. It was not until an hour or two later that it occurred to me that those ringing words may in reality have sounded the knell of democracy.

It happened this way. I found myself in a second-class compartment with three soldier-philosophers. You have never heard of them and I myself cannot now remember their names. One was a citizen of Germany, another was a citizen of France, and the third was a citizen of Belgium. The first was a forty-year old Alsatian who had fled across the border in 1914 and joined the French army; the second was a stretcher bearer who had formerly been a music-hall singer; and the third was an aristocratic young Belgian officer. There was also an ill mannered young French cadet from the artillery school near Havre, who had his own views on democracy and shouted them to us through his cupped hands if anyone happened to be talking when thoughts occurred to him.

At first they mistook me for an English officer, and left me to my paper. The three who were in French uniform divided some white wine and oranges, while the Alsatian exposed, with gesture, the decadence of the times, with particular reference to the society manners of wealthy young French girls. The imitation of a demoiselle serving afternoon tea, as presented by this scarred old corporal whose uniform was caked with Somme mud, before long thawed the reserve of the Belgian lieutenant, who was led to talk of the first days of the German invasion. He was not then in the army, and was living at his country home near Liège. He had gone out in his automobile to help with the wounded. He had seen the Germans march into his country, and had traversed the ruin they had left behind. He had even passed back and forth through the German lines carrying wounded and destitute civilians. They had not molested him, he said. I expected to hear first-hand of atrocities, but it seems that in those first days they were too busy with Liège. It was the marvelous array of the German army that seemed to have impressed him most. "Incroyable! Magnifique! . . ." he said again and again.

Later on the talk drifted to socialism and the Internationale. I was delighted to hear them unanimously condemn the latter organization, principally upon the belief that it had been inspired by the Kaiser as a means of disarming France before the arrival of the Day.

I then asked the Alsatian corporal if he had read Wilson's address, and pointed with some pride to the phrase about democracy. He looked at the sentence thoughtfully for a moment and then passed it to his friend, the former music-hall singer, who nodded and smiled without any great enthusiasm. Finally the corporal spoke—

"Is it worth while then, to make the world safe for democracy?"

"What I want to know," threw in the stretcher bearer, "*is democracy safe for the world?*"

"What is wrong with it, in your opinion?" I asked.

"In your lifetime," he replied, "you have seen monarchy after monarchy fail, n'est ce pas?"

I nodded.

"And because they have ennobled and enriched the few at the expense of the weak—no? Now, m'sieu, in what respect is democracy any improvement on a monarchy? You should know. You come from the world's greatest democracy."

After a moment's hesitation I replied: "Democracy has this virtue—each of the many has the opportunity to become one of the few."

This did not seem to impress him as a virtue of any great importance.

"It is always the strong who rule—" he said, "who become rich—who are happy, whether it be in France, or America, or England, or Germany. Monarchy or democracy, it makes no difference. It is the ambition of the strong for themselves or for their country that makes the war. They have the same fault at bottom—if monarchies must fail, why should democracies endure?"

"I will tell you what is wrong with democracy," interjected the Alsatian corporal. "It is the Champs Elysées of individualism. It is the playground of the ego. Everybody grabs what he can, and the strongest grabs the most."

"If democracy is worth nothing," I asked, "with what will you replace it?"

They did not answer.

"With an emperor!" shouted the young cadet suddenly. "You are not fit to govern yourselves, and you confess it. Besides, I have heard my father say, had we an emperor we should now be in Berlin."

They ignored him.

"We will replace it," said the Alsatian at last, "with a new order . . . call it socialism, communism, or what you like, but be sure, m'sieu, it will not be monarchy, democracy, or individualism. There will be no place in the world for democracy after the war. . . ."

"Listen, m'sieu. For the first time in the history of the world nations have gone to war *as a whole*. You have seen Germany mobilized to the last man, woman and child. You have seen the same thing in France and England—everyone bent to the yoke without regard to personal desire . . . except a few sales embusqués who have bought themselves bureau positions in Paris.

"Cochons!" snapped the stretcher bearer.

"Be sure that the young men in the trenches, and the young women in the munition factories, know now what communism means. They are performing the service to which the state commands them. They receive the same six sous per day, the price of ten cigarettes. They eat the same food. They obey the same commands, and live in the same hovels and ditches. The value of his life, and your life, and my life, is now reduced to the same figure, and what is the figure, hein?" He held up the finger with which he had been pointing to us. "Just that, m'sieu . . . a very small 1. We are so many little blue units, whom France exchanges for so many hectares of bloody terrain. You and I may have considered our lives precious things . . . to the state they are worth a metre of enemy trench."

"We fight on though," explained the stretcher bearer, lest I get a false impression. "La France, quand même!"

"Yes, to the end!" explained the corporal. "But the end, at the end . . . what then? Shall we forget these three years? Shall we turn the country for which we have bled, nous autres, back to the politicians, back to the capitalists, back to your democratic aristocrats who ride through the boulevards in automobiles? Who saved the country?—to whom does France belong? It belongs to us who fought—to the women who labor in munition factories—to the peasants who support the orphans of dead friends. France is *ours* now, m'sieu!"

He struck his chest with a wide gesture, and pride shone in his eyes.

"C'est vrai. C'est vrai," interjected the stretcher bearer tensely. "And do not forget," he added, "that war has taught us how to govern the country that is ours. We have for three years been trained for the new order. We have lost our individualities, our foolish desires, our envies. What we want is peace, and to see no more of death and poverty and suffering. We have learned to share—as Verlaine says—even our happiness and our tears. . . ."

"If I were a socialist," exclaimed the corporal, "I should not strive to stop the war. I should not want to go to Stockholm. Now that America is engaged I should want to see it fought to the ghastly end. I should hope for the mobilization of every citizen of America, and for the confiscation of every farm, factory and railroad. I should hope to see millions of Americans in the trenches. For then, when peace came, we should find the machinery ready, and the people trained, for socialism—just as in Europe."

"But are you not a socialist?" I asked.

"Who knows? . . ." he shrugged. "I am only a believer in a new order. I leave it to wiser heads than mine to define it."

"May I say a word?" interrupted the gentle voice of the Belgian lieutenant.

"Monsieur?"

"What you have said, messieurs, interests me very much. I believe I may say that I am a member of that class which you describe as democratic aristocrats. You seem still to feel a certain antagonism toward them. Eh bien . . . continue, for it is with that class that you will have to deal after the war."

They listened to him attentively.

"There are some of us," he went on, "who have also shared the six sous, the mud of the trenches, and your suffering. There are many of us whose fortunes are all gone. We too have learned to share. And to share with a smile. You will find many of us who will meet you half way—and more. Of course we Belgians may not agree with you as to the form of government . . ."

we love our king. But in the essentials I too believe that your new order is to arrive. . . . I hope so. And I trust that the adjustment will be one of reason, for after all—it is our country too.”

He smiled, and settled himself in his corner with a novel.

“Camarade,” said the old corporal, raising his bottle of white wine, “Salut!”

After I had returned to America, and had seen upon every billboard the slogan, “Make the world safe for democracy,” this conversation recurred to me again and again.

In America we have the last bulwark of individualism, which is synonymous with democracy as we know it, and the storm of war has at last broken against it. Already Wilson’s first war measures have set about undermining it from within. The draft proceeds and 10,000,000 men are no longer free individuals, but units of a community assigned for an arbitrary purpose. The excess in-

come and profit taxes are on the books and a man’s private fortune is now to a large degree subject to the call of the state. How long a stride is this toward fixing the sum which any man may earn? Already control, veiled as polite requests, has been exercised over factories and railroads. Already a vast army of men and women have voluntarily given up selfish aims and pleasures to give their best services to the state. These are heavy blows at individualism—huge chips from the rank growth of American democracy.

We are having our first lessons from the teacher War, and we will soon send several million young men to Europe to learn the lesson first hand. They will have seen the labyrinths of Europe cleared for the new order . . . “call it socialism, communism, or what you please.” They will swing the same broadax. Will their clearing be sowed for the same crop?

CHARLES LAW WATKINS.

Conscription in Quebec

THE Canadian Expeditionary Force has suffered its full share of casualties, and the question of retaining it at its original strength has involved the Dominion in a perplexing problem. In Sir Robert Borden’s judgment the problem admits of only one solution; and that is a measure of selective conscription to be put into effect at once. Before he went to London to attend the Imperial War Cabinet, the Conservative leader had recognized the determined current of opinion against any form of compulsory service. Without committing himself definitely upon the point, he had rather created the impression that conscription was only a very remote possibility. After sharing in the deliberations of the Imperial War Cabinet Sir Robert returned to Ottawa in May, convinced of the urgency of an immediate selective draft. Whether or not he was too abrupt in disclosing his intentions; whether or not he should have taken Sir Wilfrid Laurier into his counsel before proposing a measure to Parliament, are now both obsolete questions. Conscription was proposed; its consideration had to be postponed while negotiations were under way for a coalition government; coalition failed; and party lines were crossed preparatory to a temporary alignment of conscriptionists and anti-conscriptionists. The opposition which had been anticipated developed in all its characteristic manifestations, and the Dominion revealed in a striking manner the utter disjunction between the French and the English elements of its population.

French Canada is a complex phenomenon. In spirit it seems never to have been an integral part of the empire, but rather a distinct nationality, enduring British rule under jealously guarded privileges. Though French in language, its spiritual ties with France were severed at the Revolution; and the plight of France, which moves English-speaking Canada to the depths, never for a moment disturbs the equanimity of ultramontane Quebec. Hemmed in by English-speaking fellow subjects it has withdrawn behind its linguistic rampart and resisted anglicisation in thought, speech and mental outlook with a vehemence that never relaxes in intensity. Spiritually French Canada and English Canada meet on no common ground. And French Canada’s parochial isolation—while its picturesque quality is undeniable—does nevertheless provoke a strange discord in a Dominion that treasures above everything the British connection. It will always be a matter of deep regret that French Canada viewed the outbreak of the war with a detachment that chilled sympathy with the purposes of the Allies, and placed an untoward construction upon the Dominion’s participation in the conflict. It would be uncharitable, however, to suggest any interpretation of this apparent attitudinizing other than to attribute it to an ingrained habit of thought that could scarcely react in any other way. And no one can understand the Dominion who overlooks this essential contrariety and cleavage between its two races, and the dissimilarity of their instinctive action in a common crisis. While, broad-